

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER  
ON  
IMPROVING FIGHTER PILOTS RETENTION

PURPOSE

This paper proposes three options to improve fighter pilot retention through improving quality of life. Fighter pilot exit interviews showed additional duties, work/life balance and ops tempo are pushing pilots to leave the Air Force. We propose hiring contractors in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 to decrease extra duties, dividing 365 non-flying tours into two 180 day tours in FY 2018, and starting the Aviator Stability Program—a 2-year extension or 4-year PCS—in FY 2017.

DISCUSSION

- Decrease extra duties by hiring four contractors per squadron to accomplish non-flying duties
  - Four contractors meets most flying squadron size/needs and reduces pilot workload
    - Jobs would be scheduling, training manager, unit deployment manager (UDM), standardization and evaluations
    - Removing extra duties from pilots will decrease overtime hours and contractors will maintain continuity
    - Increase jobs without increasing active duty slots and contractor jobs have first priority for veterans and spouses.
  - Possible to implement in FY 2018 at estimated \$11,000,000 a year
- Divide 365 non-flying tours into two 180 day tours
  - The fear of getting 365 non-flying tour deters pilots' acceptance of ARP
  - 180 days is standard deployment length for a squadron deployment
  - The division decreases need for extended retraining
    - Allows for in house retraining instead of requalification course (TX)
    - Saves money on TDY assignments for retraining, but increases deployment costs
  - Implementation possible in Fiscal Year 2018

- Aviator Stability Program (ASP)

- ASP is a 4-year permanent change in station (PCS) or 2-year extension at current location
  - Ensures a more stable life for pilots and their families
  - Stability increases a pilot's willingness to remain according to exit surveys
  - The ASP takers may apply for IDE but it is not mandated
- Provides AFPC another tool to encourage pilot retention via stability
- Those who have accepted Aviator Retention Pay (ARP) are not eligible
- Implement program possible in this fiscal year (FY 2017)

## SUMMARY

This paper outlines three ways to balance work/life challenges for pilots. These proposals offer the Air Force a chance to retain pilots that are listing this as a reason to leave the Air Force. We recommend hiring contractors to decrease extra duties in FY 2018, dividing 365 ground tours into two 180 ground tours in FY 2018, and creating an Aviator Stability Program offering pilots a 2-year extension or 4-year PCS in FY 2017.